

Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal

PUBLISHED BY THE BOSTON WESLEYAN ASSOCIATION, FOR THE NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCES OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

VOL. XXVII. N. E. COBLEIGH, D.D., Editor.
FRANKLIN RAND, Publishing Agent.

BOSTON, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1866.

Terms, \$2.50, strictly in advance. NO. 41.
Office, No. 11 Cornhill, Boston.

For Zion's Herald.
"THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF FASTING."
The article on this subject in the *Herald* of the 22d ultimo, is worthy of special notice; not only because of the ability with which the writer presents his views, and the request of a Ministerial Association that they should be published, but also for the reason that they indicate a current of thought in the churches which is calculated to effect the observance of fasting, not only from the custom, but from the conscience of Christians. If the positions of that article are true, it is well; if not, they are momentarily evil. As they may not be present in the memory of the reader, it may be well to restate them. "Total abstinence from food is not the religious idea of fasting." "The Bible doctrine of fasting seems to be to eat less than usual, and in just such quantities as shall be most conducive to physical health and mental vigor, devoting the surplus thus saved from a glutinous or expensive diet to the benefit of the needy and the oppressed." "A religious fast is to throw proper restraint about the appetites and passions at all times, and keep them in due bounds."

In the progress of the argument we meet the following statements: "That the Jews often fasted by abstaining from food there is no doubt. And there is no less certainty that it was of no value in the sight of God; nay, he even reproves them." "Moses in the law did not enjoin it. Christ did not enjoin it."

"When the question was raised why himself and his disciples fasted not, his answer well nigh strangled the whole matter."

These are some of the positions taken. Compare them with the doctrines of the Methodist Discipline, not to disprove them, but to show their attitude touching the discipline of our own church, and the sentiments of our Methodist Fathers.

In the Methodist Discipline, fasting is defined by the word abstinence, and is distinguished from "needless self-indulgence." (See General Rules.) "In the Discipline, 'fasting or abstinence' is declared to be one of 'the ordinances of God,' and the same footing as 'the public worship of God,' 'the Ministry of the word,' 'The Supper of the Lord,' 'Family and private prayer,' and 'Searching the Scriptures.'" (See General Rules.) "It is also declared in the General Rules that 'It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation—by fasting or abstinence.'"

In the chapter "Of the duty of Preachers to God and themselves," fasting is declared to be one of "the means of grace," and one of the "instituted" means of grace. The instituted means of grace are distinguished from the "prudential." The instituted are "Prayer, Searching the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, Fasting and Christian conference." These are distinguished from the prudential means of grace in that they are reckoned, "Denying ourselves every useless pleasure; temperance in all things; instance, in food. Do you only that kind and that degree which is best, both for body and soul?" "Do you use only that kind and that degree of drink which is best, both for your body and soul?"

Again, The Discipline provides that, "after solemn fasting and prayer," preachers to be received at Conference shall be asked several questions, one of which is this: "Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?" In that same book of Discipline he is charged "to take care that a fast be held in every society in his circuit on the Friday preceding every quarterly meeting; and that a memorandum of it be written on all the class papers."

Is the author of that article a Methodist minister? Perhaps not. If he is, has he forgotten the promise he made when that question was put to him? Is his essay a sample of his "recommended fasting or abstinence?" Allow me to call his attention to another utterance of Wesley and Methodism in the Discipline.

In the chapter on "enforcing practical religion," there is the following question and answer: "Why are we not more holy? Answer. Chiefly because we are enthusiasts, looking for the end of the means. We fast only upon two or three instances; who of us rises at four, or even at five, when we do not preach. Do we know the obligation and benefit of fasting or abstinence? How often do we practice it? The neglect of this alone is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We are continually grieving the Holy Spirit of God by the habitual neglect of a plain duty. Let us amend from this hour."

Now we are prepared to place the doctrines of the essay under review, and of Wesley and Methodism as expressed in the Discipline, touching fasting, side by side. The essayist confounds fasting with ordinary self-denial. Wesley and Methodism make a broad distinction between them. So does the Bible. The essayist says, a religious fast is to abstain from food at set times, as your health, strength and labor will permit, Dis. p. 55.

The essayist says, fasting is proper, or an ordinary measure, a relief for gluttons. Wesley and Methodism say, fasting is an ordinance of God, a means of grace instituted by God, which all Methodists are expected to use in order to evidence their desire for salvation and to increase in holiness. The essayist says, Christ did not enjoin it, but well nigh abrogated the whole matter. Wesley and Methodism have been teaching for more than a century, that fasting or abstinence from food is a plain duty, the neglect of which grieves the Holy Spirit of God and produces spiritual feebleness in the soul.

The conclusion is, if the essayist is right, Wesley and Methodism are wrong, and have been blundering upon this matter in a most marvelous manner. But all this may be. Perhaps the Discipline is wrong and the essay right after all. If the Discipline is right, many of us are sinners touching this matter, and our sin is not venial. It must be confessed that very general practice is nearer the essay than the Discipline. I am free to confess that my own has been. Many times when talking with sin have I heard a voice saying, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." I tried it, but generally gave way when the struggle was severe, and often thought I fasted away devils in, in the effort to fast one out. I would then fall back upon the doctrines of the essay under review until confronted by my necessities again, and aroused to another effort by the undeniable example of Christian antiquity, and from the subject, I sought the opinion of others. Some said one thing, some another. With most principle that seemed undecided, or settled on the others, it did not agree with them. That was just my opinion. Fasting did not agree with my health, as I dreamed, when the fact was it did not agree with my appetite, and therefore the whole matter was either dismissed or postponed.

This continued till I became ashamed of the fact that I, a minister of the gospel, and a Methodist, had no settled scriptural views upon a matter of such vital importance. I did not know "the obligation and benefit of fasting or abstinence." With these feelings I sat down to the question, Is fasting or abstinence, from heaven or of men? I came to the Scriptures with the firm resolve that if I there found that God required it, I would accept it as imperative—if God sanctioned it as a means of grace by promising blessings to those who used it, I would seek those blessings in that way. By that examination I reached the conclusion so well and truly expressed in the Discipline, viz., that fasting or abstinence is an ordinance of God, one of the means of grace which God has instituted for the discipline of his people and their growth in holiness; and therefore "the neglect of this alone is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit," because while we decline this, we are as the Discipline says, "continually grieving the Holy Spirit of God by the habitual neglect of a plain duty. I resolved to obey the exhortation of the Discipline, and amend from that hour. Not because Wesley and Methodism said it, but because God had said, "Turn ye even to me with all your heart and with fasting, and with weeping and with mourning, and read your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness." Since that hour, I can truly say I have felt a completeness of consecration and acceptance which I did not feel before. For the benefit of any who may have had similar convictions, I wish to lay before the readers of the *Herald*, in another article, some of the considerations which led me to these conclusions.

SKOWHEGAN.

SABBATH EVENING TWILIGHT.
Delightful hour of sweet repose,
Of love, of love, of love, of love,
I love thy deep and tranquil close,
For all the Sabbath day is there.
Each pure desire, each high request,
That burned before the temple shrine,
The hopes, the fears, that moved the breast,
All live again in light like thine.

I love thee for the fervid glow
Thou sheddest around the closing day—
Thou golden lines, those wreaths of snow,
That light and pave his glorious way!
Thou hast before the temple shrine,
The hopes, the fears, that moved the breast,
All live again in light like thine.

I love thee for the unbroken calm
That shrouds this fading scene,
And thence his kind and soothing charm
That hushes all the world's din.
Thou hast before the temple shrine,
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Latin, and was early familiar with the French, Latin, and Greek languages; "She showed a discriminating judgment of books and men, and without any unique trait of genius, presents perhaps, one of the completest characters, moral and intellectual, to be found." Not only was she a woman of great intellectual power and very extensive learning, she was also deeply pious. Her piety was not of a vague and visionary character, betraying her into emotional inconsistencies, but of a practical and intelligent quality, which made her life harmonious and pure, and eminently qualified her for the duties she was called upon to perform. Her piety was seen from a brief extract from a diary kept by her in which she frequently noted her religious experience. She says: "If comparatively to despise and undervalue all the world contains is esteemed great, fair or good; if earnestly and constantly to desire Three—thy favor—thy acceptance—thyself, rather than any of all things thou hast created, be to love Thee—I do love Thee." Her character is also seen in the management of her numerous family under circumstances exceedingly trying in their nature. Ten of her children lived to grow up, and to her, in addition to her other cares, were confided their early training and education. She had one room of the rectory fitted up as a school-room, and here for six hours each day she devoted herself to the instruction of her children. Everything connected with the school was conducted with the utmost exactness, and surprising proficiency was made by nearly all her children. Her rules and regulations for the government of her school and her methods of instruction, show an understanding and a qualification on the part of the teacher worthy of imitation.

Careful as Mrs. Wesley in the education of her children in literary pursuits, she was still more thorough in their religious instruction. And first of all, as part of their religion, they were taught to observe all the little courtesies of life, and trained in all the amenities of social intercourse. Even before they were old enough to kneel or speak, it is said, she had them assume an attitude of prayer. Around her knee they learned the Lord's Prayer, and as they grew older they were instructed to enlarge their prayers in their own words. She had a regular system of theological instruction, prepared by herself, covering all the important teachings of the Bible, usually embodied in a catechism, and used by her children, and trained in all the amenities of social intercourse. Even before they were old enough to kneel or speak, it is said, she had them assume an attitude of prayer. 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Missionaries.

FROM OUR MISSION ROOMS AT NEW YORK.

TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS.—A lady gives us one thousand dollars for the "new Mission House," and to perpetuate the name of a precious father within the walls of what she is pleased to call the "central, consoling and strengthening" of the Centenary contributions before the church. A gentleman, also, sent for us that he might arrange, by the gift of one thousand dollars, to have the name of a departed one, dear to him and his house, placed within the halls of this Centennial edifice. The wife of a Methodist preacher, likewise well known as having for many years literally "labored in the gospel" with her husband, is insisting that they do something liberal for the "new Mission House," and the amount of one hundred dollars. But this is like the wife of a Methodist preacher. Our chief concern is that all our offerings should be made in the spirit which was manifested at the great meeting held in the Cooper Institute.

THE NORTHWEST WISCONSIN CONFERENCE approved the plan of having a memorial stone at each Conference, and appointed a committee with power.

THE WEST WISCONSIN CONFERENCE also approved the plan of having a memorial stone in the building for themselves, and appointed Rev. Alfred Brunson a committee to carry out their purpose.

THE GENERAL MISSIONARY COMMITTEE.—This committee will meet on the 11th inst. at 10 o'clock, Nov. 8, at nine o'clock, in the Mission Rooms, New York. Will all the presiding elders particularly take notice and address their respective representatives to their probable wants within their respective Districts and Conferences? Do this, with the particular care of the committee, and best possible aid may be made in the cause of the mission and board for intelligent action.

THE MISSIONARY ADVOCATE FOR OCTOBER.—This number has been issued in advance of its date that all the friends of the cause of missions in the church may have the opportunity of reading the earnest and able appeal of the Central Centenary Committee, in behalf of the cause of missions, before making final distribution of their special offerings to the cause of God on this Centennial year of American Methodism.

The Centenary.

CENTENARY CONVENTION IN NEW YORK. The Centenary work on the New London District of the Providence Conference will receive a fresh impulse from the Convention to be held in New York, Nov. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, Dec. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, Jan. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, Feb. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, Mar. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, Apr. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, May 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, Jun. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 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